Franklin Steel Commons

Prepared by
Katie Lechelt
Research Assistant, University of Minnesota
Conducted on behalf of
Hope Community
December, 2009

This report (NPCR 1298) is also available on the CURA website:
www.cura.umn.edu/search/index.php

December, 2009

Neighborhood Partnerships for Community Research (NPCR) supported the work of the author of this work, but has not reviewed it for publication. The content is solely the responsibility of the author and is not necessarily endorsed by NPCR.

NPCR is coordinated by the Center for Urban and Regional Affairs at the University of Minnesota. NPCR is supported by the McKnight Foundation.

Neighborhood Partnerships for Community Research
330 Hubert H. Humphrey Center
301 - 19th Avenue South
Minneapolis, MN 55455
phone: 612/625-1020
e-mail: ksn@umn.edu
website: http://www.npcr.org

Franklin Steele Commons

Masters of Landscape Architecture & Urban and
Regional Planning Capstone Project
May 16, 2008

Designed By:
Katie Lechelt

Department of Landscape Architecture
Urban and Regional Planning Program
Center for Urban & Regional Affairs

University of Minnesota
Minneapolis, MN

Commitee Members:

Rebecca Krinke
Director of Landscape Architecture Graduate Studies

Carissa Schively Slotterback
MURP Advisor

Vince Debritto
Studio Instructor

Summary:

This project redesigns the four blocks just north of Franklin Avenue between Park and Portland Avenues to create an urban agruculture community. The goal of the project is to extend the mission of Hope Community, Inc and reconnect the greater Phillips neighborhood with Elliot Park. The design was developed by combining the goals of Hope with existing conditions at the site and neighborhood scale.

Acknowledgements:

I would like to thank Hope Community, Inc. for the opportunity to work with the organization over the 2008 year as well as the Center for Urban and Regional Affairs for funding the project. I would also like to thank my committee, Bob Close and Joe Favour for providing feedback throughout the design process.

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BACKGROUND

Hope Community Inc., a non-profit subsidized housing developer, is located at the corner of Franklin Avenue and Portland Avenue in Ventura Village of Minneapolis, MN. The organization, which began in 1977, works to build an inclusive, life-giving community by transforming relationships of fear into creative opportunities of mutual support. It's focus is to create a public community that will persist for the long-term, maintain the ability to deal with changing issues and be strong enough to consistently welcome and encourage new members and partnerships. Currently, Hope Community, Inc. is in the process of constructing The Wellstone as phase three of four in the Franklin Portland Gateway project, which is a four building housing project at the corner of Franklin and Portland Avenues. The organization has also constructed Children's Village and the Jourdain as the first and second phases of the project which include a mix of subsidized and market rate housing as well as a grocery store, offices for the organization and a community center. As their revitalization of an area previously controlled by crime and drug use continues, Hope Community, Inc. has wondered how surrounding neighborhoods separated by freeways can be reconnected. Public open space is also a limited commodity near Hope Community, Inc. These questions along with my own interests in urban design and public open space led me to work with Hope Community Inc. to investigate these question. The research then resulted in a series of problem statements, which guided my project intent.

PROBLEM STATEMENTS

What are some different aspects in programming needs between inner city parks and suburban parks?

What are some ways design can respond to programming needs of inner city residents?

What does a design that reconnects neighborhoods separated by freeways look like?

What planning studies conducted by the city of Minneapolis within the last 5 years are expected to affect the Phillips neighborhood and Hope community, Inc?

GOAL STATEMENTS

The goal statements for the project were developed from a combination of discussion with Hope Community staff and research. The biggest desire by Hope Community's development team was to extend its development model through the project area as a few properties in the area are already owned by the organization, but the distance between those buildings and the rest of the community make them feel disconnected. The youth program also needs its own space as it is currently housed in Children's Village.

In addition to the desires by Hope Community, the need for smaller blocks and neighborhood type open spaces were identified in the process

of researching the existing characteristics and the differences between suburban and urban park spaces. The final goal statements are as follows:

*Addition of at least 60 housing units (Hope Community Goal)

*Create space for food production and carbon sequestration

*Create a space for expansion of Hope Community's youth program

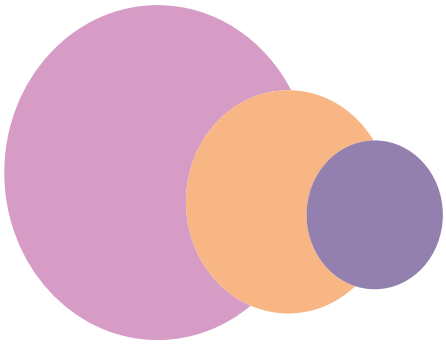
*Recreate the urban grid to facilitate better pedestrian space

DESIGN INTENT/ VISION

The defined goal statements, developed by myself and Hope Community, drive the design intent as the project works towards answering the questions through the following research which led to the design concept. The design will serve both the needs of the surrounding study area as defined through the research as well as Hope Community, Inc. and codeveloper Aeon's vision for the area.

The vision for the project space includes a variety of housing types along with community gardens that serve as a place for passive recreation and most importantly a means of reconnecting Elliot Park and Ventura Village over I-94. As many different activities are planned, the final design will have a hierarchy of spaces that work together to create a community that serves the individual as well as the greater community of Elliot Park and Ventura Village.

As part of working with Hope Community, Inc. and Aeon, their continued input throughout the research and design phases was also a key to the success of the project as an informational tool for further development. Currently, the project site is a mix of medium density housing, undeveloped properties and Franklin Steele Park with I-94 dividing the space in half. Hope Community, Inc. is planning on completing the fourth phase (Franklin Steele) of the Franklin Portland Gateway at the northwest corner of Franklin Avenue and Portland Avenue which is included as part of the design.



Key:
Half Mile Study Area
Project Area

Franklin Steele Commons
Project Area
Figure 1
Katie Lechelt
College of Design Hubert H. Humphrey Institute

OPPORTUNITIES/CONSTRAINTS

The site offers numerous opportunities as well as several constraints. The primary constraints include the presence of I-94 and the limitations of fully developing over the freeway due to cost restrictions as well as engineering constraints. Portland Avenue also presents a difficult situation as it provides a thoroughfare for traffic between Minneapolis and suburbs to the south. Other barriers to change include:

-A history of deterioration and lack of investment

-A disproportionate influence of automobile and commuter traffic

-Alienation and fear that create conditions for criminal activity

-A lack of quality, affordable housing

-Insufficient community resources, civic environments and commerce

-Inadequate pedestrian pathways and safe play spaces for children

-Freeways that isolate the area from neighboring communities

In addition to the previously stated barriers, gentrification is a big concern for Hope Community as the surrounding community gradually increases in value from redevelopment. Dr. Martin Mulligan explain the process.

GENTRIFICATION

"Gentrification is a process in which higher income households displace lower income residents of a neighborhood, changing the essential character and flavor of that neighborhood. The experience of gentrification is paradoxical for there is much to like about the coffee shops, the variety of good food, bookshops...the infrastructure upgrades that come. But the thing that disturbs me is the potential for a serious loss of cultural and social diversity--the loss of otherness and difference that makes you think more deeply about who you are. I suspect that communities that lose their local human diversity can become more mundane, less engaging and less resilient."

-Dr. Martin Mulligan

Gentrification is a big concern for Hope Community, Inc. as million dollar condos are located just a mile north. To combat the process as the Franklin-Portland Gateway is completed, Hope has created a model for equitable development that provides an alternative to the wholesale gentrification of a historically diverse, low-income urban-core neighborhood. The model includes innovative approaches to real estate development and community engagement (Hope Community 2005 Annual Report). As of 2005, Hope housed 126 adults and 121 children in 89 units with 41 additional units under construction. Of the 130 units, 60 percent are affordable to households earning less than 50 percent of the area medium income of $78,500 for a family of four (Ibid).

Opportunities on the site include the redevelopment of vacant and under utilized lots as well as the potential to continue the work Hope Community, Inc. has done to recreate the urban village, which is at the

heart of their mission. Additional opportunities include the potential to create a demonstration for how spaces along freeways could be used to help mitigate the need for food and energy. To continue Hope's work of creating an equitable development within a historically diverse neighborhood, I also looked at how the design of open space and additional housing within the area needs to be programmed for area residents. This is a very important part of my work as the spaces I created needs to serve the residents of the area without inviting unwanted activities such as drug dealing or the creation of unsafe areas along with the potential for redevelopment which does not serve existing residents.

PRECEDENTS

Precedents are a very important part of urban development projects as any development can be proposed, but not every type will thrive. For that reason, I chose a combination of award winning affordable housing projects and local projects.

Jingletown Homes

Jingletown Homes, designed by Pyotok Architects, is located in Palo Alto, California. The development features smaller duplexes situated around open spaces. The streets are also designed without curb and gutter in order to create multi-user spaces. The development is an excellent precedent for the project as I am looking to create public spaces within the blocks

Park Avenue Development

(Source: Google Earth)

The Park Avenue development by Close Associates utilizes small streets and a public green space to create a smaller neighborhood feel in an area surrounded by larger homes and a parking garage to the north. The precedent is an excellent example for the project as similar streets need to be created since the area is also dominated by "super blocks"

Photos by Lechelt

Urban Agriculture

Urban Agriculture is another important part of my design as the price of food continues to increase and because it provides smaller scale community gathering spaces.

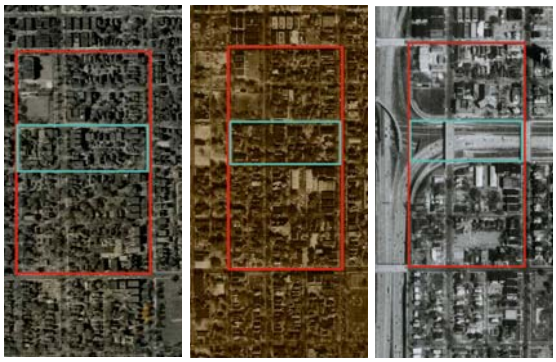
The Community Design Center of St. Paul uses seven gardens on public property to teach teens about job skills, sustainable living and community involvement. The organization also runs two farmers markets and sells produce to local restaurants. The precedent provides an excellent example for the design as the photos illustrate backyard gardens and community interaction.

Photos by CDC

NEIGHBORHOOD ANALYSIS

Housing Scales

The following photos from the Borchert Map Library at the University of Minnesota, depict the physical changes that have happened over the last 50 years.



The first photo shows how pre-freeway houses were small single family units situated within an urban grid.

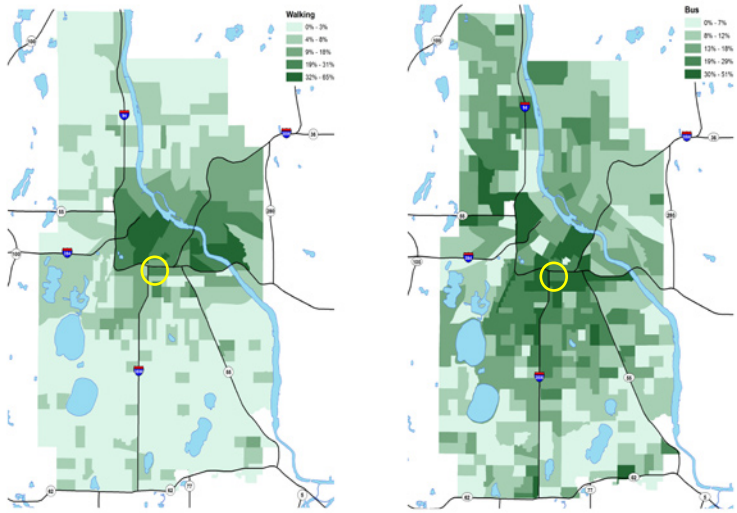
The second image shows how larger apartment structures started to infiltrate the area, which are still present.

After the freeways were constructed, the area became dominated by “Super Blocks” and large parking lots as shown in the third picture.

Figure 3: Park Proximity

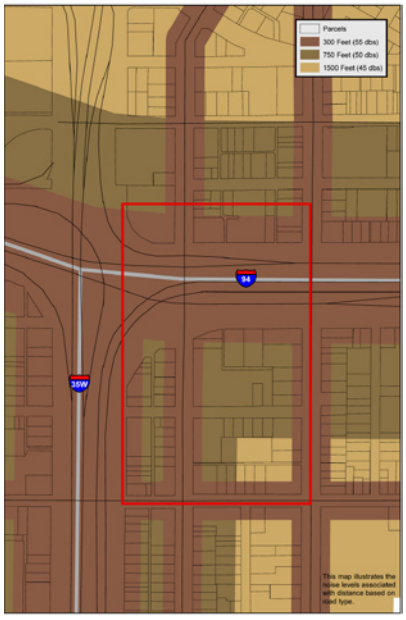
The park proximity graphic shows how the majority of the project area is within a 1/4 mile of a city park. This shows that large public spaces are not needed. Instead, smaller block oriented spaces should be created for community space.

Figure 4:Transportation



These maps of Minneapolis show how areas closer to downtown are much more multi-modal than further away neighborhoods including the project area. This is important to the design as it needs to have a well developed walking network as well as road network.

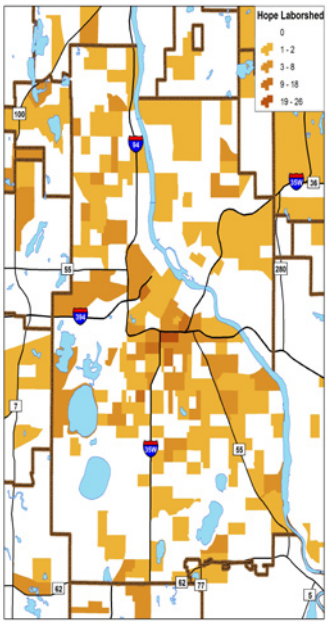
Figure 5: Road Noise



The project area is also affected by high levels of road noise from the junction of I-35W and I-94.

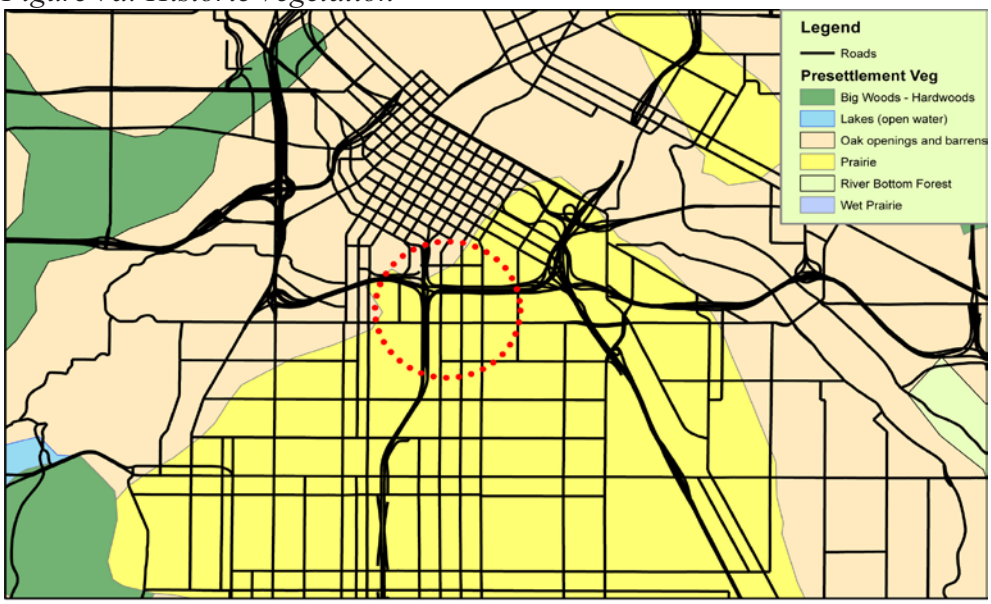
The northwest corner of the site is affected the most as indicated by the white circle, which should not be developed very much.

Figure 6: Home Location



The home location diagram illustrates where area workers live. As eluded to in the transportation maps, the largest number of workers also live in the project area as the concentration of walkers is quite high. This reinforces the need to have a strong multi modal transportation network.

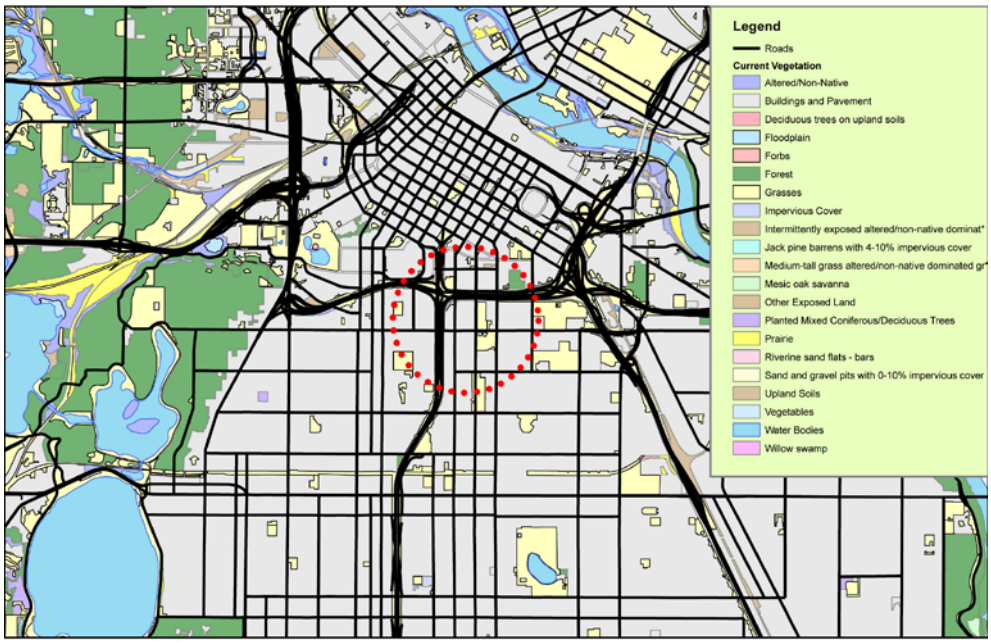
Figure 7a: Historic Vegetation



Source: MNDNR & MetroGIS

The historic vegetation graphic depicts Marshner's map of the landscape at the time of settlement. The project area, shown by the red circle, was dominated by prairie with oak openings just to the west. As settlers came upon the area, they would have seen a mix of tall grasses mixed with flowers.

Figure 7b; Current Vegetation

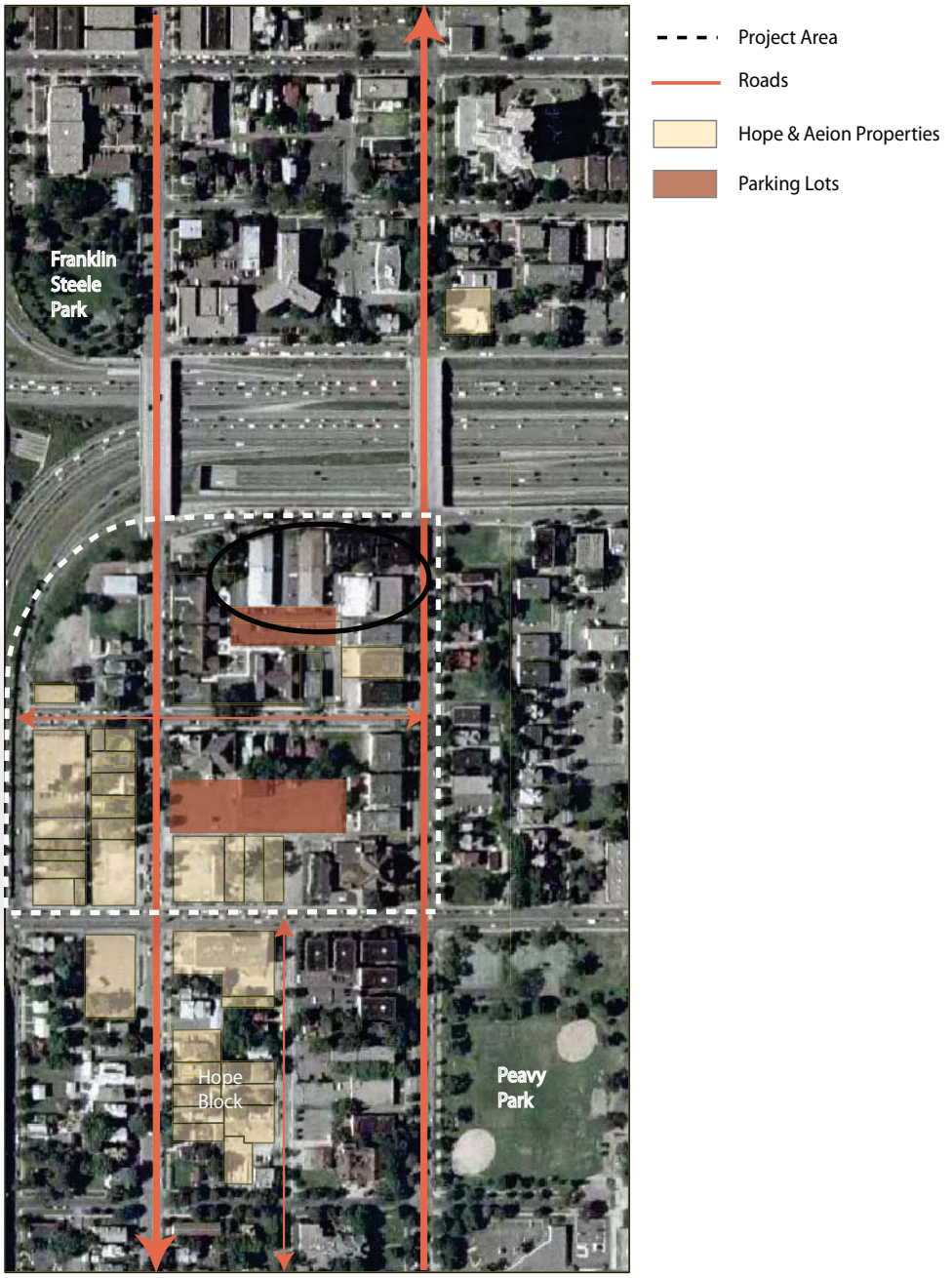


Source: MetroGIS

The cuurent vegetation map depicts how urbanization throughout the project area has completely eliminated the natural vegetation as it was at the time of settlement. This drastic change creates a strong argument for reestablishing some of the native species in the area, which will help retain more stormwater on site as well as clean the air in a heavily traffic neighborhood.

SITE ANALYSIS

Figure 8: Existing Conditions



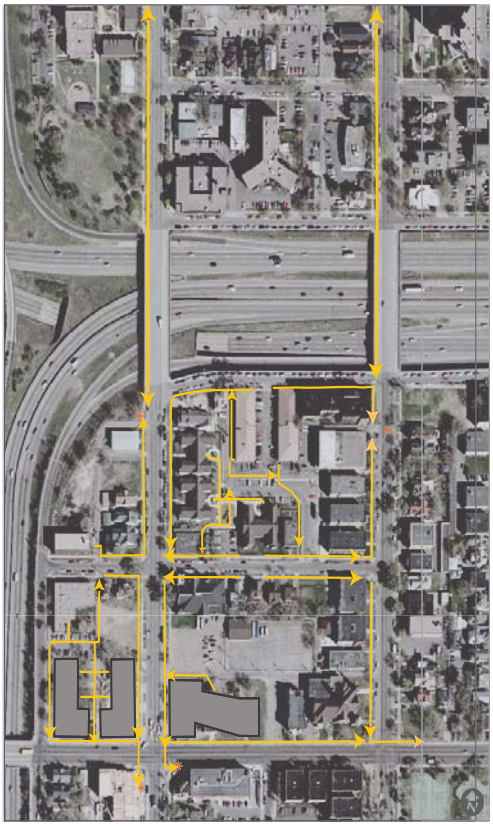
The existing conditions graphic depicts how much of the project area is covered by large surface parking lots shown in red as well as the properties already owned by Hope Community, Inc and Aeon. The majority of homes as well as the Franklin-Portland Gateway project are located along the southern side of the project area. As part of the design, approximately 160 of the oldest units will be removed along the northern boundary of the project area as shown by the black circle. These properties were chosen based on the age of the structures as well as the need to create a new road through the space to create smaller, more walkable blocks. The presence of Portland Avenue and Park Avenue, shown by the thicker lines, are probably the biggest obstacles to creating a strong walking network as each road is three lanes wide with parking on both sides and a bike lane. To create a better pedesrian experience then, a comprehensive streetscape will need to be designed as well as reconstructing the street section to decrease the lane widths.

Existing Housing Types

Photos by Lechelt

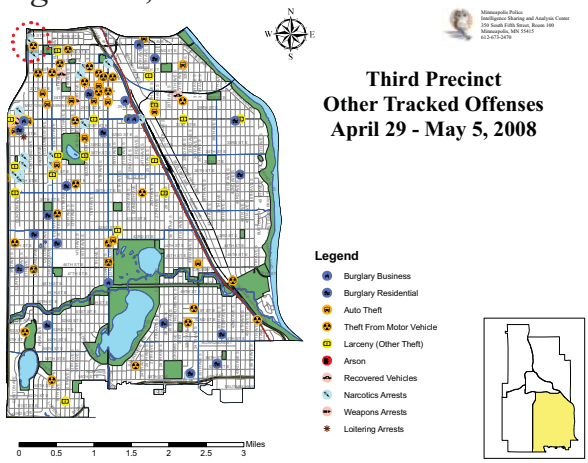
The three photos depict the wide range of existing housing types within the project area. The top right photo shows the oldest apartments, which are replaced by new townhomes and community gardens. The lower left shows new apartments built by the Allianz foundation which will be kept along with the revitalized housing in the top left.

Figure 9: Foot Traffic



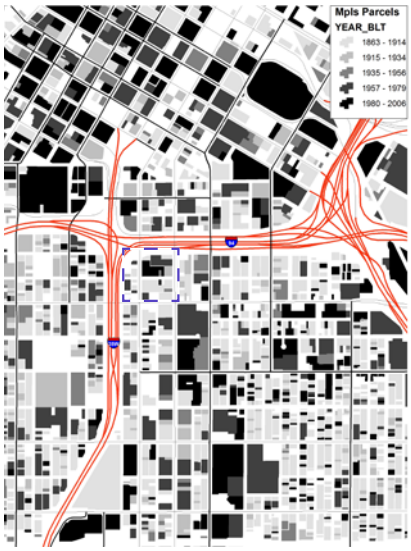
Walking is one of the most important aspects of the project area as it accounts for 1/3 of transportation along with private autos and buses. The existing walking network is very disconnected with long blocks.

Figure 10; Crime Statistics



Crime statistics are important to the project design as the area has had a history of drug dealing, resulting in numerous other crimes as well. decreased property values and vacant buildings. The stats shown are only from one week, but the highest concentration is in the project area.

Figure 11: Building Age



The building age graphic depicts how most of the existing housing within the project area was constructed before 1957.

The graphic also shows how the blocks in the project area are at least twice as large as other housing areas to the southeast.

Figure 12: Ownership

Along with the building age graphic, the ownership versus rental map depicts a strong lack of owner occupied housing in the project area with the newest buildings being owner occupied to the southeast.

Based on the neighborhood and site analysis, the design will be based on creating a highly walkable area that is still defendable as crime is an issue in the area. Creating a sustainable community is also very important as the natural ecosystem has been greatly modified. To create a more sustainable community, stormwater will be held on site by rain gardens and infiltration trenches. Native species will also be planted throughout the site and residents will be able to grow some food through community gardens and a farm, which will contribute to a farmers market.

DESIGN PRINCIPLES

Ecology

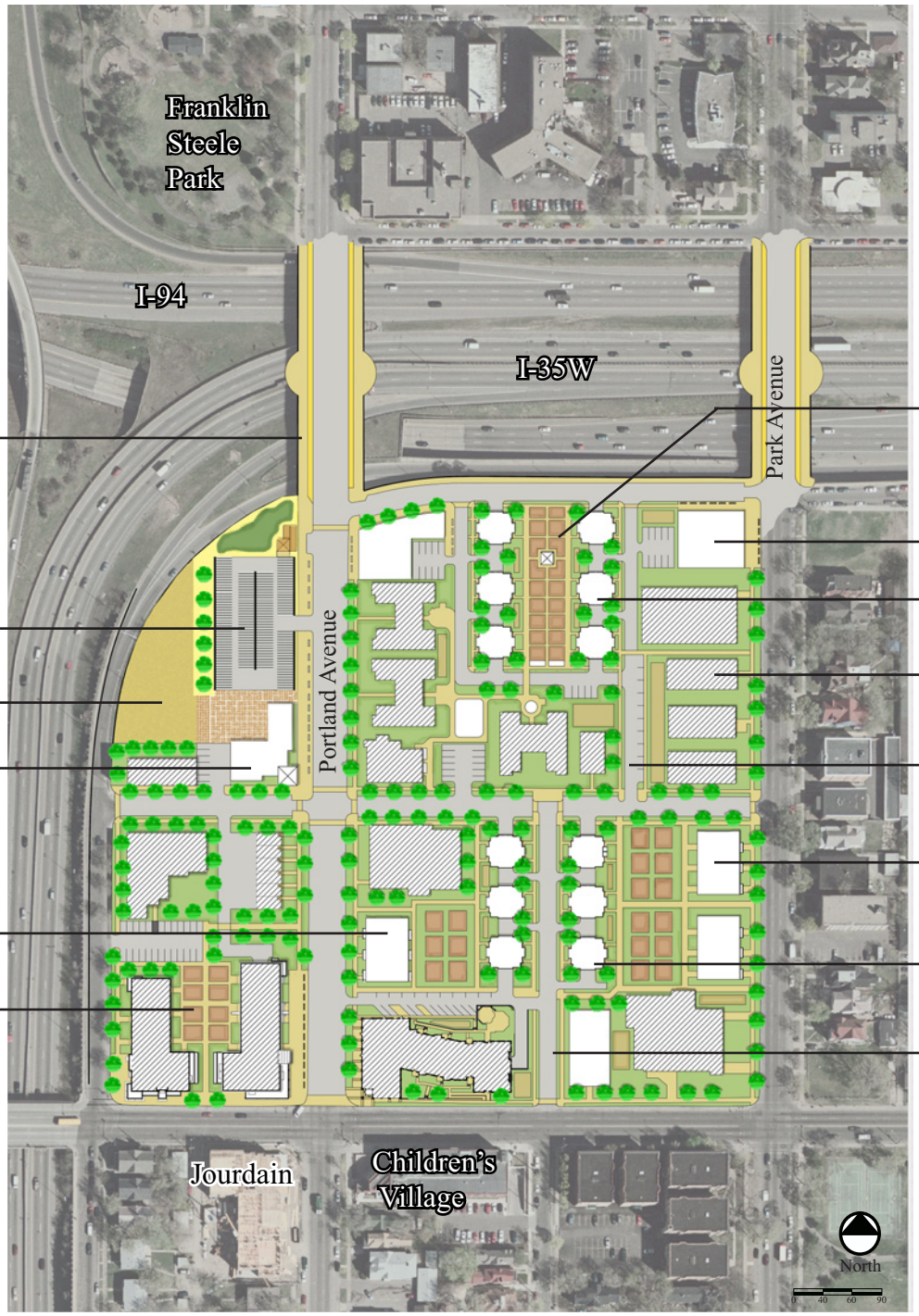
STORMWATER

Walkability

Urban Agriculture

DEFENDABLE SPACE

FIGURE 13: CONCEPTUAL DESIGN



Expanded Walkway

Farmers Market

Farm

Youth Center

Row Houses

Community Garden

Community Gardens

New Apartments

Townhomes

Existing Apartments

New Street

New Rowhouses

Townhomes

New Street

Small Blocks

RAIN GARDENS

FARMERS MARKET

NATIVE PLANTS

Existing Buildings
New Buildings

Townhomes	48
Rowhouses	12
Apartments	90
Total	**150**

The project design is based on a hierarchy of spaces. The addition of two new roads through the middle of the site creates more walkable blocks as well as smaller community spaces. Each of the blocks is then centered around a community garden with smaller townhomes located along the new smaller interior streets. The larger apartment and rowhouse buildings are then located along the outside of the blocks to match the other existing buildings . The blocks are then unified by a farmers market which residents would be encouraged to use. The new building located on the corner of the block with the farmers market would serve as a new youth center as well as additional apartments. The location of the youth center is significant as the youth will have a prime role in running the farm and market. Just as the St. Paul Design Center precedent, the combination allows the youth to learn enteprenurial skills through selling produce, making salad dressings and work towards bringing the greater neighborhood together. To help create a better connection between the development and Elliot Park, the Park Avenue and Portland Avenue bridges are also widened and the lanes are narrowed to create a wider pedestrian space shown in more detail later. Along with the community model, an ecological model is just as important to create a sustainable environment. As most of the area is currently impervious, the first step towards a sustainable model is already completed with the community model as a large part of the impervious area will be gardens. The other two parts are to establish native species as well as contain runoff to the site. As the site has areas that are more impervious than others, rain gardens and infiltration trenches are required to collect and filter the water.

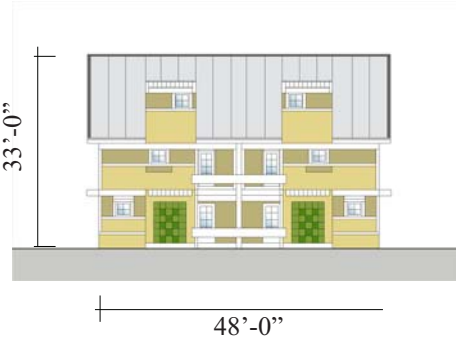
HOUSING TYPES

New Housing

Apartments/Rowhouses

Townhomes

New housing on the site will include a combination of townhomes along the interior of the blocks and apartments/ rowhouses along Portland and Park Avenues. The different housing types were chosen in order to give choices of rent or ownership.



The townhomes, which are meant to be rent-to-own units, are approximately 1800 sq. ft. The rowhouses will also be approximately 1800 sq. ft. and the apartments will be 500-750 sq. ft. The image to the left gives an illustration of how the townhomes would look from the street. The images to the right show the existing units on the Hope Block which gave me the idea for the townhomes.

Townhomes

(Photos by Lechelt)

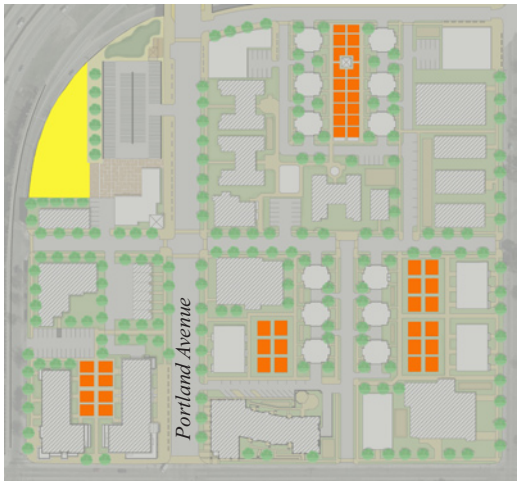
Rowhouses/ Apartments

(Photo by Lechelt)

To buffer the gardens, the outer ring of housing within the project area is a mix of apartments and row houses to match the housing on the other side of Park and Franklin Avenues as well as protect the smaller housing within the interior of the blocks.

URBAN AGRICULTURE

Community Gardens & Farm



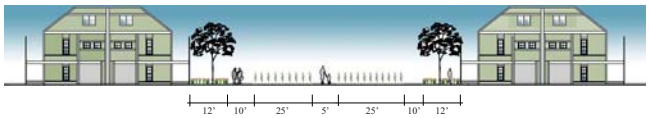
Community Gardens

The Farm

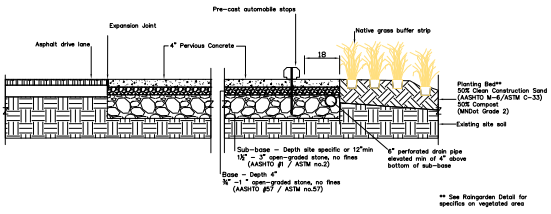
As a key component of the master plan, urban agriculture is incorporated through community gardens and a farm located along the northwest corner of the site. As a resident of the area, each individual would be offered their own plot in the community gardens and would be able to contribute to the farm for the biweekly farmers market.

The 25’ square community gardens are located at the center of three blocks as shown in orange on the image to the left. As a member of the community, each resident receives their own garden plot as well as the opportunity to participate in the farm and market.

Community Gardens

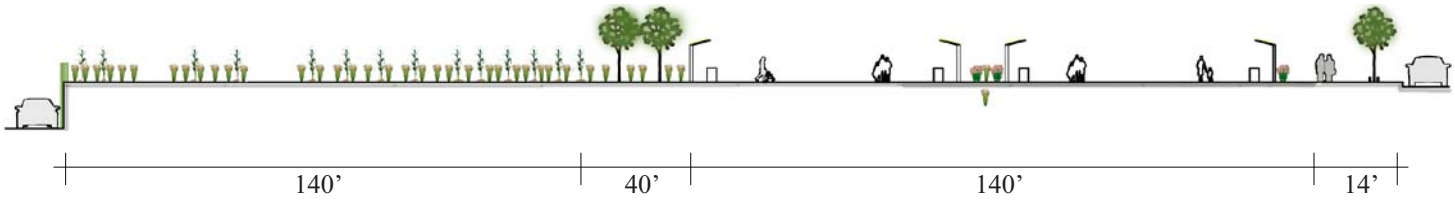


Farmers Market



The farmers market is the top hierarchy of the plan as it is the main gathering place for all residents in the development as well as surrounding neighborhoods. As part of creating a more sustainable community, the market serves as a gathering place as well as a parking lot when the three area churches need parking. The detail to the left shows how the lot will also be paved with pervious concrete to help water infiltrate.

The section below shows how the farm and farmers market fit together as well as the green noise walls located along the northwest side



of the farm. To help shade the paved areas and collect energy, the edges of the farmers market are also lined with solar panels on top of shelters which double as the stalls for produce.

Noise Walls

(Source: Living Systems)

Noise is a big concern of the area as the whole northern and western sides are surrounded by 35W and 94. To decrease the level of noise and help pollution, the noise walls surrounding the site will be converted into green walls. The sides facing the freeway will be covered with plants that take up a lot of the pollutants produced by cars and the sides facing the community will be covered in ornamentals and vines to support the farm.

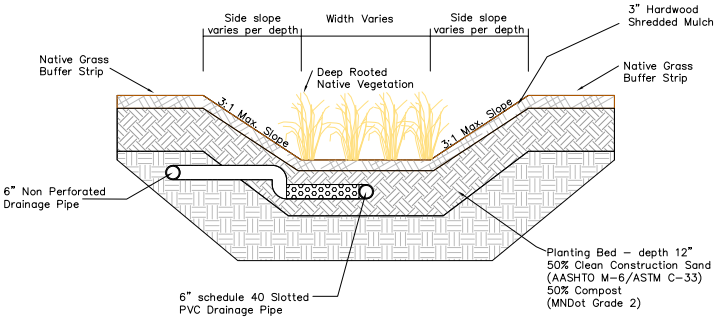
STORMWATER

Rain Gardens

Infiltration Trenches

The vast amount of impervious surfaces in the area create great amounts of runoff. To keep more water on site, stormwater is captured through the use of rain gardens in residential areas and infiltration trenches along Portland and Park Avenues. The design of the rain gardens is very typical as shown below.

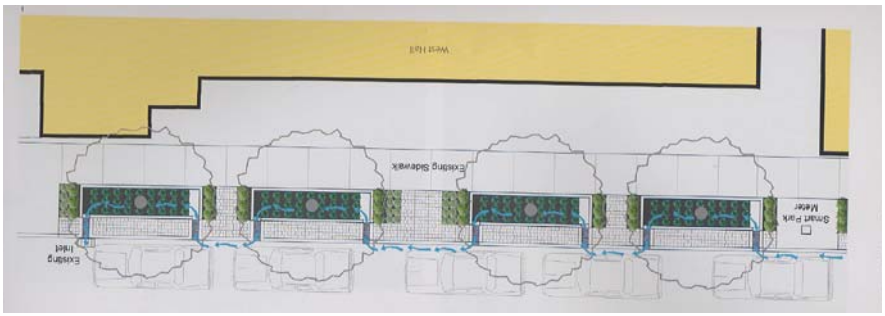
Rain Gardens



Typical Rain Garden Cross Section

(Detail by Lechelt)

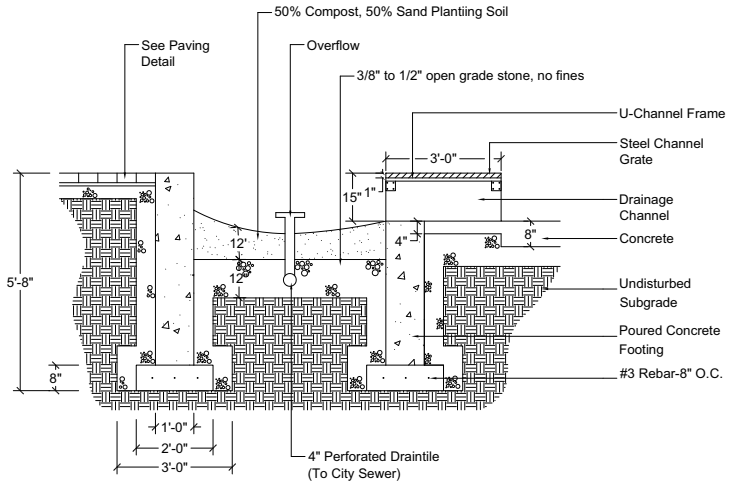
Infiltration Trenches



To increase infiltration along the main roads, a series of trenches are used along Portland and Park Avenues as shown to the left. Areas within the blocks, such as along the community gardens, will utilize rain gardens.

(Source: Living Systems)

Construction Detail

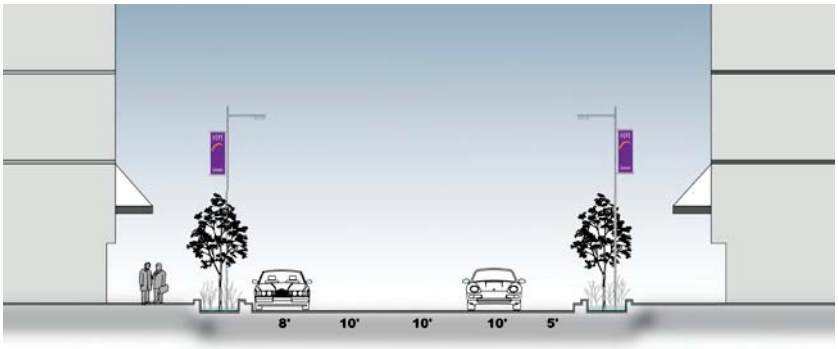


Detail by Lechelt

The construction detail illustrates how the water flows into the trench through a channel and then infiltrates into the sand/compost mix. Any excess water flows out of the trench into the next one down the street, which continues the same process.

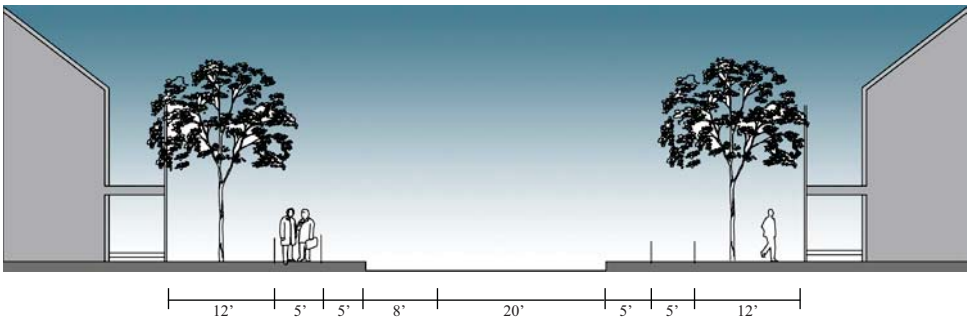
DESIGN TYPOLOGIES

Street Sections

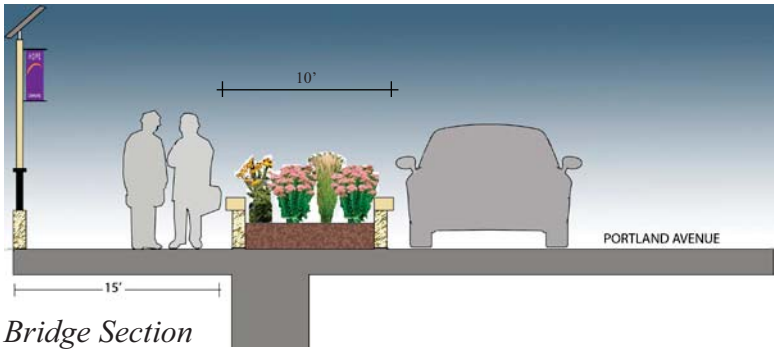


Portland Avenue Street Section

The first street section depicts Portland Avenue based on the Access Minneapolis plan. The sidewalks including the trenches are 15 feet wide. The street section becomes much narrower compared to the existing conditions. Instead of having a parking lane on each side of the street, only one will be kept. The lanes will also become 10 feet wide instead of 12. The second section depicts the geometry of the new interior community streets. The main drive area will be twenty feet wide with one eight foot parking bay. On each side of the street, the townhomes will have 12 feet of frontage with a five foot walk and boulevard.



Neighborhood Street Section

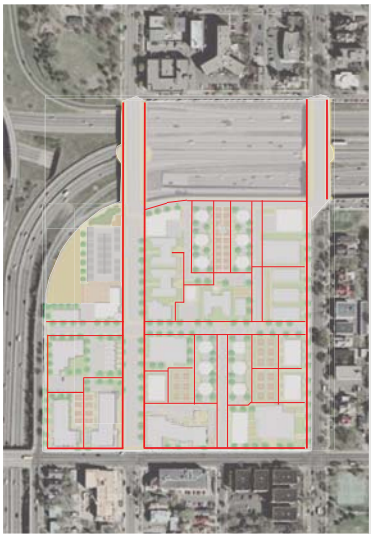


Bridge Section

The final section show how the new bridge addition creates a much more pleasing pedestrian experience as well as brand the bridge as part of the Hope Community so people passing through recognize the area.

The culmination of the design then creates a strong walking network with a hierarchy of spaces that allows individuals to reach their destinations faster as well as create defendable space without the use of fences.

Proposed Foot Network

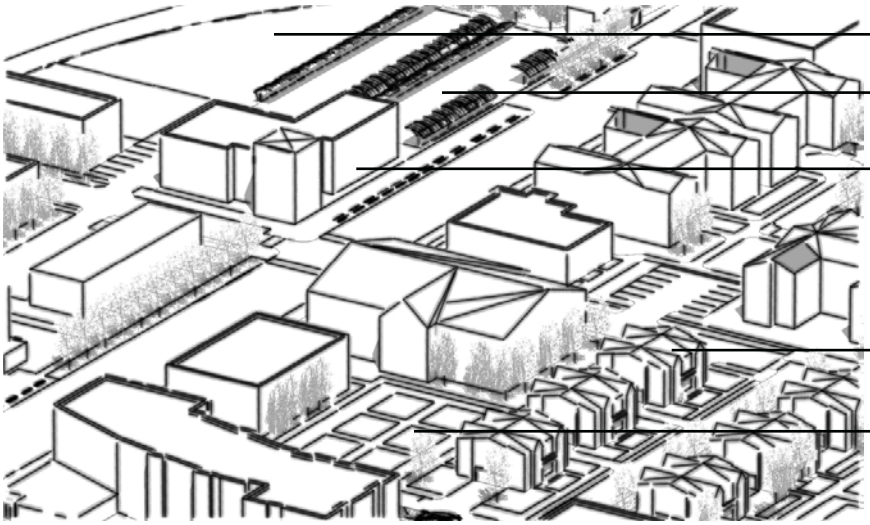


SKETCHES

Southeast Perspective

The two perspectives depict a general sense of building masses and street sections. The southeast perspective above depicts one of the community gardens as well as the rowhouses along Park Avenue and the townhomes.

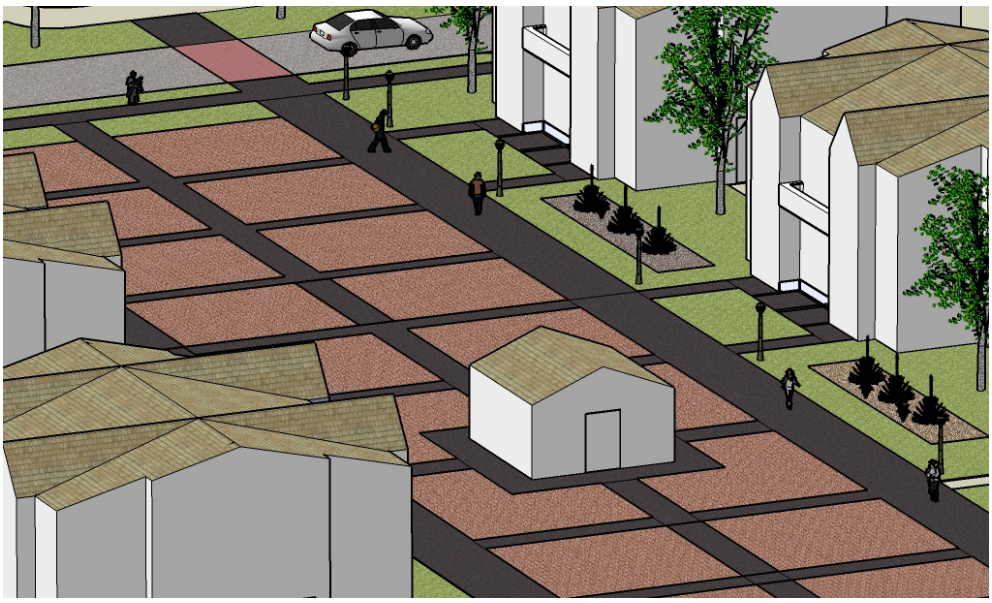
Northwest Perspective



The northwest perspective depicts the market/parking lot and the farm as well as the Wellstone and a church in the foreground.

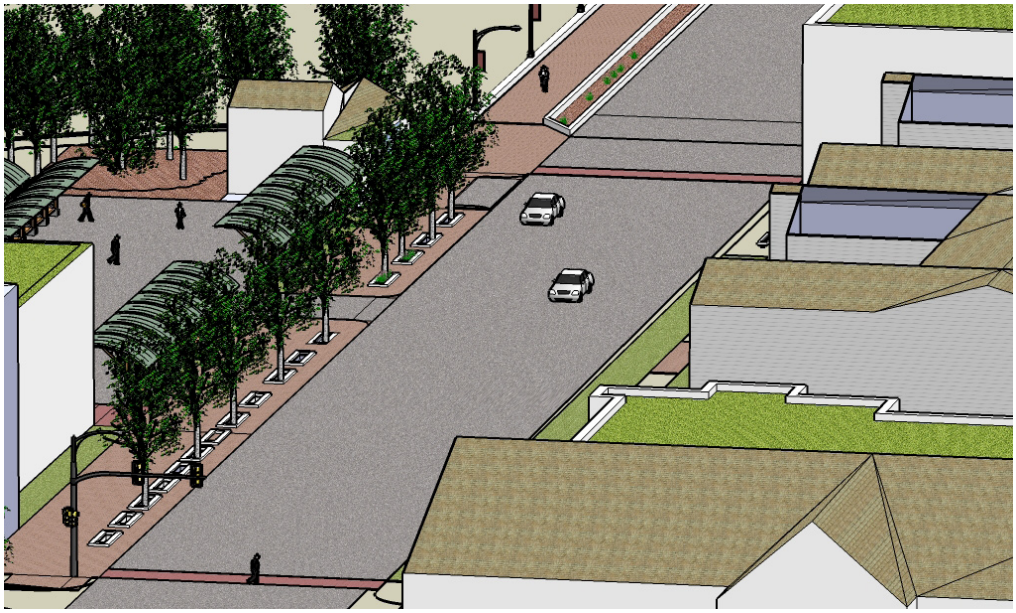
Northern Block Section

Northern Community Garden



This sketch gives a closer look at the community garden space between the townhomes on the north side. Rain gardens are located along the edge between the townhomes as well as street lights.

Farmers Market/ Parking Lot



This sketch gives a closer look at the farmers market and the streetscaping along Portland Avenue. As seen by the crosswalks at each intersection, the pedestrian has just as much importance as the auto. The sidewalks also have much more space as well as a barrier from traffic with the infiltration trenches and tree canopy.

PLANT TYPOLOGIES

Trees

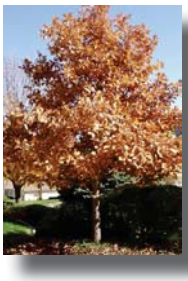
Red Maple

Honeylocust

White Oak

Red Oak

Swamp White Oak



Shrubs

Hazelnut

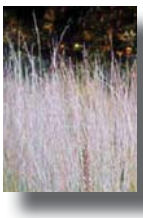
Pasture Rose

Dwarf Bush Honeysuckle

Perennials

Black Eyed Susan

Little Bluestem



Prairie Blazing Star

Ironweed

Fox Sedge

Kalm's Brome

Monarda

June Grass

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